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ABSTRACT

Eleven annotations based on recent entries in the ERIC system concern school administrators' leadership role. Research studies cited deal with principals' role in curriculum development and instructional improvement, types of behavior related to leadership effectiveness, and evaluations of principals by experienced teachers. Also included are theories of leadership style, practical suggestions for school administrators, a general survey of what is known about leadership, and ways the professional role of school principals is changing in contemporary education. (MLF)

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The Best of ERIC

Clearinghouse on Educational Management

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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Leadership Effectiveness

1. Clay, Katherine, and Long, Susan. "CU-RI-OS'-I-TY, n. 1 . . . to Gratify the Mind with New Discoveries." *Thrust for Educational Leadership*, 7, 1 (October 1977), pp. 18-21.

Because this article has a light, easy-to-read style and contains a good deal of information, it is both useful and enjoyable. Clay and Long examined 187 documents, books, and articles on school leadership, most of which "list or describe the competencies and abilities and attitudes needed by today's successful principal." None, however, mentions curiosity, which the authors feel "may be the most important attribute of a successful principal."

The role of curiosity in effective leadership is clearly explained. A school's teachers may have a wide range of professional interests, and even the interests of an individual teacher may change during his or her career. As a result, it is impossible for any individual principal to possess all the expertise to give effective support to all the teachers in a school. This would not be a problem if "all principals were curious enough to find out what support all their teachers needed, and curious enough to find the resources necessary to provide that support."

The balance of the article consists of an ingenious curiosity test and "a brief review of what the educational literature says about the principal as an instructional leader." The documents cited are not necessarily the best on the subject, but all are readily available and each has some distinguishing quality; some are thought-provoking or interesting, others good thumbnail references of checklists or handy hints. Ten aspects of leadership are included: community relations, school climate, teacher evaluation, student needs assessment, recent educational trends, group decision-making, self-awareness, staff development, the change process, and curriculum development.

2. ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. *Leadership: Improving Its Effectiveness*. Research Action Brief. Eugene: University of Oregon, 1978. 4 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

This review, written for an audience of secondary school principals, discusses in concise, readable language some of the empirical research that has been done concerning effective school leadership.

The discussion focuses on three familiar aspects of leadership effectiveness. One section considers Fiedler's observation that "effective leadership means having the right person in the right situation." A leader performs best when meaningfully challenged by the position, according to Fiedler; "a safe, secure, and well-ordered environment may not always be a productive one."

A second section focuses on Kunz and Hoy's conclusion that teachers are most willing to accept the professional leadership of principals who are high in ***initiating structure*** (the ability to establish order in the school environment) and ***consideration*** (the ability to develop good relations with subordinates). Of the two, though, "maintaining a well-ordered school is apparently more desirable than maintaining a friendly one."

The study then examines decision-making. One way principals can become more effective leaders is by implementing programs of participative decision-making (PDM). Evidence indicates that involving more people in decision-making can lead to the making of better, more correct problem-solving decisions. In addition, PDM can increase the satisfaction of those who become involved in decision-making. However, making decisions by majority vote can become competitive and frustrating for participants and should, therefore, probably be avoided. "For many schools . . . a centralist PDM program may be most desirable, with the principal, as group leader, soliciting the opinions and insights of collaborators but retaining final decisional authority."

3. Ferguson, D. Hugh. "The Role of the High School Principal in Curriculum Development and the Improvement of Instruction." Summary of Ed.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1975. 22 pages. ED 132 699.

Ferguson points out that the professional role of the school principal is not always clearly defined. For example, some research indicates that the principal's role often vacillates between serving as a school's instructional leader, on the one hand, and as its executive manager, on the other.

Ferguson undertook his study to clarify the principal's role

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in two specific areas—curriculum development and instructional improvement. He examined how "superintendents, curriculum directors, high school principals, department heads, and teachers" evaluate principals' leadership performance in four specific areas: curriculum development, curriculum implementation, organizing for instructional improvement, and developing a positive instructional climate. Responses indicated that principals fill all four roles but that the most important of the four is "providing leadership in developing a positive instructional climate."

However, not all groups see the principal in the same way. Specifically, administrators (superintendents, curriculum directors, and principals themselves) are more certain than staff members (department heads and teachers) that principals fill all four leadership roles. Thus Ferguson concludes that principals who want to be seen as "effective leaders in curriculum and the improvement of instruction must involve faculty members in curriculum development."

4. **Fiedler, Fred E.** ***A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness. McGraw-Hill Series in Management.*** New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967. 310 pages. ED 015 354.

Despite its age, this is one of the most important and influential studies yet made of its subject. The heart of the work is Fiedler's Contingency Theory, which holds that leadership effectiveness is contingent on a good match between an individual's leadership style and the needs of a situation.

The Contingency Theory identifies two leadership styles. Human relations-oriented leaders are motivated primarily by a desire for good interpersonal relations with their subordinates. Task-oriented leaders are most concerned with success in carrying out the task at hand.

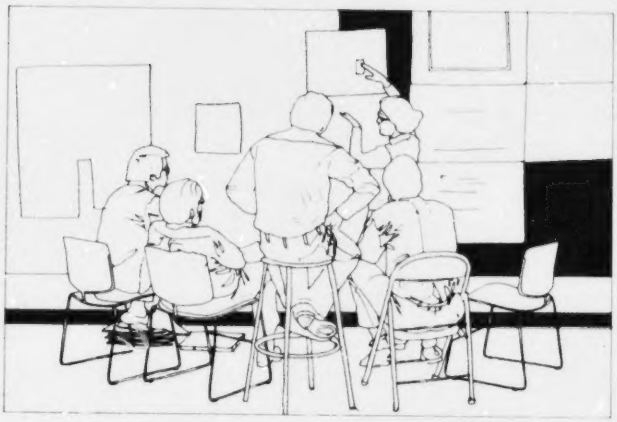
The key variable in determining which style fits the needs of a situation is the favorability of that situation. Favorability is affected by the quality of leader-member relations in a group, the degree to which a group's task is structured, and the formal power the leader derives from occupying his or her position. In general, a situation becomes more favorable as leader-member relations improve, the task becomes more structured, and the leader's position power increases. According to the Contingency Theory, task-oriented leaders perform best in very favorable or unfavorable situations, while human relations-oriented leaders are more effective in moderately favorable situations.

The greatest value of the Contingency Theory may well be its success in showing that the needs of a specific situation, as well as the qualities of a leader, can influence leadership effectiveness.

5. **Kunz, Daniel W., and Hoy, Wayne K.** "Leadership Style of Principals and the Professional Zone of Acceptance of Teachers." ***Educational Administration Quarterly,*** 12, 3 (Fall 1976), pp. 49-64. EJ 150 169.

Kunz and Hoy describe their study of how certain types of behavior are related to leadership effectiveness. The study is interesting for its methods, as well as its conclusions. As their measure of a leader's effectiveness, the authors used the willingness of a subordinate "to hold in abeyance his own criteria for making decisions and to comply with orders from superiors."

Teachers will not respond identically to all types of administrative directives. However, the amount of administrative control teachers are willing to accept—the size of their "zone of acceptance"—is relatively uniform in two areas. Most teachers consider decisions concerning matters of organizational maintenance, such as meeting deadlines or making accurate reports, to be a legitimate concern of administrators. Conversely, most teachers and even many administrators feel that administrators should have very little control over matters in the personal domain, specifically "things that either have little direct relevance to the organization and/or are extremely personal."



There is, however, no such agreement among teachers about the zone of acceptance in matters of professional judgment such as willingness to experiment or techniques for evaluating pupils. This led the authors to suggest that the size of the professional zone of acceptance of most teachers in a school might be a good indicator of the principal's effectiveness as a leader.

Two types of behavior are most often associated with effective leadership. The first, ***initiating structure***, includes establishing "well-defined patterns of organization, avenues of communication, and methods of procedure." The second, ***consideration***, refers to "friendship, mutual trust, respect and warmth in the relationship between the leader and members of his staff."

Kunz and Hoy measured how each of these types of behavior affected the size of teachers' professional zone of acceptance. They found the largest zones of acceptance among teachers whose principals were high in both initiating structure and consideration. Further, the two qualities frequently went together. However, the authors found that, of the two, "initiating structure was the overriding factor which was related to the professional zone of acceptance of the teacher."

6. **Lavender, E. S.** "Six Difficult Ways to Increase Your Leadership Effectiveness." ***OCLEA,*** 5 (September 1975), pp. 14-16. EJ 124 132.

As the title suggests, this article offers some practical suggestions for school administrators who want to become more effective as leaders. The ideas suggested here are based on common sense and discussed in language that is always straightforward and occasionally picturesque.

Lavender recommends that administrators write clearly, in language that is free from ambiguity or jargon. A good administrator must develop clear sight—the ability to see things realistically and accurately, foresight—the ability to see what lies ahead, and insight—the ability to understand the significance

of what he or she sees and foresees. It is important for an administrator to come into contact with a wide range of ideas, perhaps by engaging in activities such as "reading, travel, worthwhile conversation, and careful listening."

Another key to effectiveness is success in creating a productive school environment and establishing "high levels of trust, openness, commitment, accountability and scope for personnel growth and satisfaction." It is also important to work to develop the leadership potential of others in the school organization. Lavender's final suggestion, perhaps his most useful and certainly his most unusual, is to take time off from work, to remain fresh on the job, and to avoid becoming overinvolved with it.

7. Miskel, Cecil. ***Public School Principals' Leader Style, Organizational Situation, and Effectiveness.*** Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1974. 162 pages. ED 098 659.

Miskel surveys current theory and knowledge about effective school leadership and then develops and tests a model of leader effectiveness. Unfortunately, the value of his discussion is seriously undermined by a clumsy writing style.

He discusses a variety of subjects, including the situational and behavioral aspects of leadership effectiveness. He also considers several different methods of assessing a leader's effectiveness, including measuring organizational outcomes and obtaining evaluations of leaders' performance from their subordinates and superordinates, and from the leaders themselves.

Miskel's model of leader effectiveness is based on the hypothesis that variables in an individual's leadership style and a school's organizational climate can be used to predict how effective that individual will be as a principal. Evidence tended to validate this hypothesis, though Miskel recommends revisions in the model to provide better ways of measuring personality characteristics, situational variables, and leadership effectiveness.

One useful byproduct of the study was the discovery of an "almost total lack of relationship between the two most common variables for selecting principals—experience and education—and administrative effectiveness." This led the author to call for the use of new criteria, such as previous behavior indicating leadership potential, in selecting school principals.

8. Myers, Donald A. "The Chautauqua Papers: A Dissent." ***National Elementary Principal***, 54, 1 (September-October 1974), pp. 18-26. EJ 104 149.

Despite his article's title, Myers does not merely dissent from the prevailing opinion that the principal is the critical person in contemporary education; he asserts its opposite: "the principal is, and will remain, a functionary rather than a leader." Further, this is true of almost all principals, since "the position, not the person, largely dictates the principal's status as functionary." A variety of societal, organizational, and sociological-psychological factors "severely constrain the actions and decision-making power of today's principal."

The functions of a public school are relatively permanent and well defined, its policies established so that it will be compatible with other schools in its district and across the nation. As a result, the principal has neither the time, nor the ability, nor the power, nor the mandate to make substantial changes in a school.

In addition, a variety of organizational factors limit the principal's power. The most important of these is the rise of teacher organizations, which evidently seek "to restructure the educational system entirely." The principal has little power over teachers; he does not hire, fire, or control salaries. "He is, in short, powerless to either reward or punish." The rise of both collective bargaining and professionalism have combined to make the role of the principal an increasingly marginal one—a mediator rather than a leader.

Finally, evidence suggests that even when a principal does succeed in introducing changes, those changes may not be of much value in improving a school.

9. Spiess, Jack. "Concepts of Leadership." 1975. 15 pages. ED 102 680.

This document is a general survey of what is known about leadership. Despite an abundance of literature on the subject, some aspects of leadership are still surrounded by confusion and uncertainty. The author finds, for example, that "very few of the numerous lists of leadership traits have many items in common." Experts cannot even agree about the relationships between a leader's effectiveness and his or her "chronological age, height, weight, physique, energy, appearance, dominance,

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self-sufficiency, emotional control, and extroversion-introversion."

These facts suggest that it is not simply the traits of the potential leader, but how well they are suited to the needs of a specific situation, that determine how successful the leader will be. Because effective leadership does vary with different situations, all people possess some leadership capabilities. While nearly everyone has what it takes to be an effective leader in some situations, almost no one can lead effectively in all situations.

Evidently, the effective leader should be able to perform two primary functions. The first, facilitating goal achievement, is the leader's success in helping the group accomplish the task at hand. The second leadership function, group maintenance, is the leader's ability to maintain good interpersonal relations within the group. Both functions are instrumental in effective leadership, though the relative importance of each will vary according to the situation.

10. **Tye, Kenneth A.** "The Times They Are a Changin' for School Principals." ***Thrust for Educational Leadership***, 7, 1 (October 1977), pp. 4-7.

This article discusses some of the ways in which the professional role of the school principal is changing in contemporary education. Today's schools face problems different from those of the past. In general, these new problems, complex and without easy solutions, are combining to make the principal "the critical person in the educational process."

Tye suggests that it is important, therefore, to distinguish between two roles the principal may take: an administrator (oriented primarily toward maintaining the status quo) and a leader (functioning as an agent of change and growth). Most of today's principals have been selected and trained to serve as administrators, but education might be better served by "principals who define themselves and are defined by others as leaders."

Tye emphasizes three areas where a principal's leadership is particularly important: goal attainment, human processes, and the school's sociopolitical context. Goal attainment is the school's success in doing its job of educating. Human processes are the interpersonal relationships and interactions within a school. A principal attends to a school's sociopolitical context by understanding politics and recognizing how a school fits the needs of the larger society it serves. A fourth dimension of leadership, perhaps the most important of all, is the principal's self-awareness, the ability to assess—realistically—his or her own strengths and weaknesses.

11. **Utz, Robert T.** "Principal Leadership Styles and Effectiveness as Perceived by Teachers." Paper presented at American Educational Research Association annual meeting, Chicago, April 1972. 11 pages. ED 064 240.

Utz reports on the findings of a survey of how experienced teachers evaluated school principals. Subjects were first asked to characterize the overall performance of their principals on a scale ranging from "excellent" to "poor." At the same time, the teachers also evaluated principals according to the levels of concern they showed for "production" and for "people." The results, as expected, showed that principals rated as "excellent" had "significantly higher mean scores . . . in both the 'Production' and 'People' dimensions than did principals ranked in each succeeding lower category."

Survey responses also made it possible for the author to develop profiles of "excellent" and "below average/poor" principals. An excellent principal is characterized by direct interaction with teachers—orienting new teachers, soliciting a wide range of opinions before making policy decisions, and evaluating teachers' performance honestly, emphasizing suggestions for how to improve. In short, an effective principal is "respected and trusted by the teacher and is seen as one who cooperates with the teacher in getting the job done."

Conversely, the lowest-ranked principals tended to be much less involved with their teachers, providing minimal orientation for new teachers, utilizing little or no teacher input in program planning, and seldom evaluating teacher performance.

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